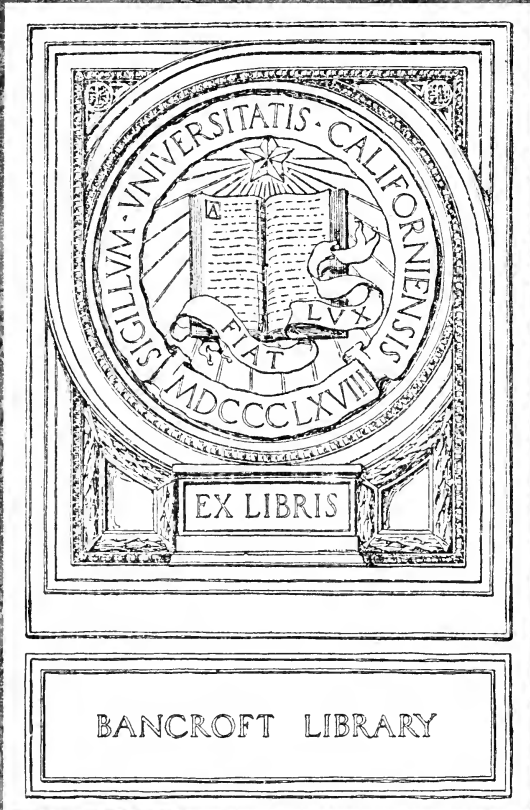


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THE  
NAMING OF AMERICA.

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A PAPER

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*THE WISCONSIN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, ARTS, AND LETTERS.*

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BY PROF. J. D. BUTLER, LL. D.

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MADISON, WIS.:  
ATWOOD & CULVER, PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPERS.  
1874.

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## THE NAMING OF AMERICA.

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The name America has been called a monument of ingratitude. It is said to be a misnomer, and worse than that, to owe its origin to fraud.

Our continent owes its name to Americus, the baptismal name of the Florentine navigator, Vesputius. Concerning him some specimens of popular opinion are these.

It is charged that, "after returning from Brazil, he made a chart in which he gave his name to that part of the main land. The date of his first voyage, as he gives it, is unquestionably false." So says Appleton's Cyclopaedia. The whole narrative of that voyage Irving pronounces a "fabrication." Morse, father of the telegraphic inventor, says, "Americus had so insinuated that the glory of discovering the new world belonged to him, that the bold pretensions of a fortunate impostor robbed Columbus." Morse quotes the Scotch Robertson as authority. A thousand others have done likewise. Robertson accuses Americus "with premeditated usurpation of rights," etc. One of the most elaborate of British encyclopedias says, that "as the employment of Americus afforded him opportunity, so while drawing charts he distinguished the new discoveries by the name of America, as if it were Amerigo's land, so that the true discoverer, notwithstanding the complaints of the Spaniards, was defrauded of the honor that belonged to him." Delaplaine of Philadelphia—father of our Madisonian pioneer, charges Americus with imposing his name on the continent by stratagem, and says he gained his end by waiting till after the death of Columbus before putting forward his own pretensions.

Such, during three centuries, were the ideas prevalent regarding the naming of America.

Within the last generation, however, the researches of Humboldt in his *Examen critique* of the Geography of the Fifteenth Century, 1835-9; of Henry Harries in his *Bibliotheca Americana Vetustissima*, (New York, 1866); of Varnhagen in his monograph on *Amerigo Vespucci*, (Lima, 1865), and of others, have vindicated the character of Americus, demonstrated that he discovered more of America than any other man, and even rendered it probable that he set foot on this continent (June 17, 1497,) before either Columbus (August 1, 1498,) or Cabot (June 24, 1497,) while his name was bestowed on his discoveries not only without his instigation but without his knowledge.

It ought to be here said, in passing, that but for aids ministered by the Library of our State Historical Society, the following paper could not have been prepared in Wisconsin. There is no possibility of finding elsewhere, within the limits of our state, the documents to which every original investigator of my theme must betake himself.

The earliest charge against Americus, and that the mother of a myriad others,—*fons et origo malorum*,—originated twenty-one years after his death, and a thousand miles from his home. These circumstances stamp it with suspicion, and the more since no contemporary trace of similar aspersions can be detected in Spain, where he lived and labored.

It was in 1533, and in Nuremberg, that John Schöner remarked in a geography he issued then and there (*Opusculum Geographicum*), that "Americus sailing westward from Spain and coasting Asia, believed a region which belongs to *upper India* to be an island, which he appointed to be called by his own name."

Schöner's words were: "Americus Vesputius maritima loca Indiæ superioris, ex Hispaniis navigio ad occidentem perlustrans, eam partem quæ superioris Indiæ est, credidit esse insu-

lam quam a suo nomine vocari instituit. (H. Harries, p. 304.) This passage affords no proof that Schöner *blamed* Americus for thus baptizing his finding with his own name. But there is no doubt that he did. Yet the first name which Schöner himself gave to the southern half of our continent on a globe he had made thirteen years before, and which we may see to-day in the city library at Nuremberg, is *America*. Besides, eighteen years before,—or in 1515, the same Schöner had published a geography in which we read, “America or Amerigen a *novus mundus*,—and fourth part of the globe, named after its discoverer Americus Vesputius, a man of sagacious mind, who found it in the year 1497.” (H. Harries, p. 142.) As Schöner subsequently censured Americus, he must have changed his mind after 1515. It was after that time perhaps, that he first learned about the abuse of Columbus by Spaniards, and indignant at his wrongs naturally attributed the defrauding him of fame to the man who had gained most by that fraud. Yet the truth is, there is no proof that Americus ever gave his own name either on maps or otherwise to any portion of his findings,—though most other voyagers in all ages have thus perpetuated their fame.

The slur cast on Americus by Schöner was repeated and exaggerated, especially by Las Casas in his *Historia de las Indias*, a work not completed for forty-seven years after the death of Americus, till it reached the pitch indicated at the commencement of this article.

But no map with the name “America” on it of an earlier date than 1520, is known to exist, or to have ever existed any where. This first map appeared in Vienna, and long before any bearing the name America was issued in Spain, although its own date was eight years after the death of Americus. If any suggestions of his led to its issue, they must have been those fabulous, or at least thaumaturgic, “poisons given to work a long while after.”

But the maker of this Vienna map had no thought of doing

injustice to Columbus. It is true he printed "America" in capitals on the southerly portion of the new found region which extends no further north than the equator, but he intended to call only a portion of that region by that name, for beneath the word America the word *province*, "Provincia," is subjoined. America, as then and thus designated, was a smaller part of the West Indies than the West Indies now are of America.

Thus much of honor may have been deserved by Americus, who possibly first discovered the American main land, and at all events was the first explorer of more of it than even Columbus.

Moreover, on the Vienna map, above the name America so that it may well apply to the north shore of South America and the West Indies, we read this epigraph: "In the year 1497 this land with the islands adjacent was discovered by Columbus, a Genoese by order of the King of Castile."

The original text is, Anno, 1497, hæc terra cum adjacentibus insulis inventa est per Columbum, Januensem ex mandato regis Castellae. AMERICA, provincia.

On this map, as on all before it and on legions afterward, the two portions of America are widely sea-severed. The truth is they were long regarded by no means as Siamese twins, but as belonging to different continents.

Men find what they seek. Columbus voyaged for India, thought his first landing was there, and forced his crew to swear they thought so too by threatening to cut out their tongues. (H. Stevens, "Historical and Geographical Notes.") Like too many others, he forgot that voting asses to be horses never made long ears short.

Columbus called his finding the main land or islands of India beyond the Ganges (*Insule India supra Gangem.*) manifold memorials of his mistake we see to this day. Witness our aborigines from pole to pole called "Indians;" witness the archipelago between the Americas now as in the beginning,



“West Indies;” witness *Las Indias*, the Spanish official name including even now all our continent; witness the words, “King of the Indies,” *Indiarum rex*, stamped on every Spanish dollar we, ever saw.

Show Agassiz one bone, and he would reconstruct any animal; so when Columbus beheld one corner of trans-Gangetic India, that is of Eastern Asia, he could map the whole of it, for that eastern coast line was known to him from the relations of overland travelers. The configuration of that Asiatic line is not without resemblances to that of eastern North America. Hence the delusion lasted longer, and each new finding pieced out the Asiatic map, like a new patch sewed on an old garment. A quarter of a century after the death of Columbus, the prince of German geographers still maintained that Mexico conquered by Cortez ten years before, was the Chinese city Quinsay, so excessively extolled by Marco Polo. So Humboldt tells us in his *Cosmos*.

Syllacius, the first Italian who described the first voyage of Columbus, in his “*opusculum de insulis nuper repertis*,” assured both that that navigator had pushed through to trans-Gangetic India, and perhaps also satisfied that a ship sailing westward must slip off from the world, represents Columbus as circumnavigating Africa. *Ultra Æquatoris metas, usque ad Arabiae beatas insulas*. Persistence in mistaking North America for Asia was one among countless illustrations that false knowledge is worse than ignorance; a truth so well understood by Isocrates, who always exacted double fees from students who came from another teacher, one for unteaching as well as one for teaching.

Among the results of Columbus's error, the Pacific was called the *South Sea*, being supposed to lie almost altogether south of the equator, and the better half of the western hemisphere was reckoned by many an appendix of Asia, even until Behring passed through his Straits only four years before the birth of George Washington.

Faith in the connection of North America with Asia outlived many a proof to the contrary. It was scarcely less credulous than the "hard shell" citizens of the Egyptian section of Illinois, who are reported to continue deaf to all reports concerning the death of "Old Hickory," and so still cast their Presidential votes for Jackson.

But this Asiatic mania, if I may so call it, was much less lasting in reference to *South* than to North America. That portion of our hemisphere in fact approaches the old world nearer than the northern half of it does, and its actual distance from Africa was under-rated. On some early maps its easternmost cape was set down as no more than ten degrees west of the Cape Verd group. Its outline was also ascertained by nautical survey, while the corresponding coast of North America was still mapped after the model of Asia.

As neither the position nor the coast-line of South America had anything in common with European ideas respecting Asia or the globe southeast of it, it was at once regarded as a discovery veritably new. Accordingly, while the West Indies were viewed as only an extension of the Canaries, and Columbus was thought to have discovered only some other islands further toward the Indies of the East (*Insulas alias incognitas versus Indos*), and North America was drawn after an Asiatic pattern, or held at most for a thin barrier on the road to Asia and cut through by straits if not by seas,—men were already satisfied that South America was nothing less than a continent, and so sought for it a name. No man did more to make South America thus known to the old world than Americus. He was first to trace its shore line through fifty degrees of latitude even down to Patagonia.

"As early as 1501, Vespuccius proposed to double the extremity of the Southern Hemisphere." H. Harries, p. 226. Would it have been surprising if he had appeared in the earliest maps and books honored with a name in the world of wonder he had revealed? But he does not?

The oldest map containing engraved delineations of the new countries was published at Rome in 1508. On this we see the southern portion of our hemisphere which stretches through more than fifty degrees of latitude and sixty of longitude, inscribed, "Land of the *Holy Cross*, or New World." No America was yet dreamed of. Says Roselly de Lorgues, "The discovery having been made under the auspices of the cross, and for the triumph of the cross, the new land was usually designated on maps by the sign and name of the cross. (*Terra sanctae Crucis*.)" Nor yet was there any other western continent in existence, according to the notions of the Roman mapmaker. His nearest land west of Cuba is Bengal. North of it the nearest land is that explored by the Cabots, which is mapped as a part of Asia, and conterminous with Gog and Magog. This map (11½x16 inches) was drawn by Ruysch, a German navigator, who is believed to have sailed with Americus.

It was forbidden to infringe its copyright or that of the geography which contained it, on pain of excommunication, but the price of the work was to be fixed by the Pope's librarian. Such a defense of the public from booksellers, and of authors from pirates is now, alas! one of the Lost Arts.

Humboldt arguing that Americus never knew that he had discovered a continent, holds that the words *Mundus Novus* (new world), in the fifteenth century, meant no more than any region new found, no matter though of small extent. Admitting the phrase to have been often thus used, it clearly was not as to the case in hand. The title of the first German edition (1505) of the third voyage of Americus is, "Concerning a new found region which may well be named a world." *Von der neu gefundenen Region die wohl eine Welt genennt mag werden.* Again the *Mundus Novus* on Ruysch's Roman map was well-nigh as extensive as we now know South America to be, and larger than Europe. But this map appeared four years before the death of Americus. Can we believe that he

himself knew less concerning the greatness of his own discoveries than was manifest on maps to all the world?

It is further worth notice that while the words *mundus novus* head the very first publication of the voyages of Americus, they never occur in the title of any one among the twenty-one works which were issued in the fifteenth century in relation to Columbus.

One reason may be that the islands—or at least the mainland which Columbus brought to light needed in his opinion no name. According to his foregone conclusion they had been named already with appellations time-honored and in part sacred.

A principal reason then why our continent does not bear the name of Columbus, was that he and his contemporaries supposed there was no continent in existence which still remained without a name. Bombastes cut off only the hand of his slain enemy, because the head had been cut off already. Janus was never struck on the back of the head because he was all face, and time cannot be seized by the hind-lock for he is bald behind.

The first landing of Columbus on the American main was at the mouth of the Orinoco. He thought it the paradisaical Gihon. He died assured that he had there bathed in one of the rivers of Eden. According to his faith, "the airs of Paradise did fan its shores, and angels officed all." Small thanks would he have rendered anyone who had proved that his landing was not in Paradisaical Asia, but that it was of the earth earthy. His celestial dream he would have scorned to exchange for stamping his name on any continent. If forced to give up his beau ideal for a continental reality, his must have been the feelings of Lessing's hero in Nathan the Wise, who at the denouement found out that the lady whom he had adored with the love of forty thousand brothers, and who loved him as much, was after all only his own sister.

Should a less sentimental image be demanded, Columbus, if.

disenchanted of his golden delusion, may be compared to a Californian pioneer bringing to the mint a load of glittering specimens from far off *placers*, and there convinced that they were one and all iron pyrites,—fool's gold and nothing more.

Columbus fancying America to be Asia lay under a mistake analogous to that of the Northmen in the tenth century. They sought no collective name for their great discovery, because they were convinced the America they had found was no more than an outlying fragment of Europe.

But how was greatness thrust upon Americus? How did his name, at first too plebeian to appear on title-pages, or to indicate a cape or bay, make its way into books and maps, and, supplanting all other appellations of the New World, gain a glory eclipsing whatever is reflected from all such names as New Spain, New England, New France, etc.?

Americus wrote several private letters, about his voyages, to friends in Italy and France, perhaps in 1502, but made no claims to give his name to any locality. These accounts of his discoveries were soon published, and were sometimes headed with his name, as *Nouo Mondo da Alberico Vesputio, Milan 1508*. More commonly their titles were complimentary to some sovereign, for that servility was then ubiquitous, which, to-day, in British army bulletins forbids naming any non-commissioned officer, even though a victory should be altogether due to him.

Thus the title-page of the earliest German edition of the letters of Americus (1509) is: "This little book relates how the two most illustrious Lords, Ferdinand King of Castile, and Emanuel King of Portugal, have searched through the vast seas,—discovered many islands, and a new world," etc. (Dies Büchlein saget wie die zwei durchlüchtigsten Herren Ferdinandus, K. zü Castilien und Herr Emanuel, K. zu Portugal haben das weyte mör erzüchet und funden vil Insulen, und ein Neüwe welt von wilden nackenden Leüten, vormals unbekannt.)

Another edition in Latin, was entitled, "concerning the Antarctic region formerly discovered by the King of Portugal. (*De ora antarctica per regem Portugallie pridem inventa*.) The earliest Italian edition was styled, "All the navigations of the King of Spain." (*Libretto de tutta le Navigazione del Re di Spagna Isole trovate novamente per el Re di Spagna*, 1495.) That monarch voyaged as easily as Solomon built the temple without lifting a finger, and no one has profited more by the law-maxim: *quod facit per alium facit per se*.

Perhaps it was his wife who, accustomed to do all drudgery by proxy, when urged by her confessor to do penance, said: "O yes, I will. I will make my maids of honor fast all through Lent!"

In many editions the motto was:

"Cum Deus astra regat et terræ climata Cæsar,  
Nec tellus nec iis sidera majus habent."

As God in heaven, so kings on earth bear sway;  
Above, below, no greater names than they.

The voyages of Americus were published separately many times, but, so far as can be ascertained, never together till the year 1507, and then in Lorraine at Saint-Dié. A professor in the gymnasium there, born in the neighboring Freiburg, was then publishing a Latin cosmography. While thus engaged, he fell in with the letters of Americus in French, translated them into Latin, dedicated them to René the local potentate, and added them to his other geographical chapters. His work was entitled, "*Cosmographiæ introductio*. \* \* \* Insuper, quatuor Americi Vespuccii navigationes."

On the title-page he mentioned this addition as "things unknown to Ptolemy and discovered by moderns." The professor's name was Waldzeemüller. After the fashion of his time he latinograecised it as Hylacomylus. In a note treating of the progress of discovery in the old continents, he adds: "but now another fourth part has been found by Americus, as

will be seen in the sequel. I see not why any one can rightfully forbid it to be called Amerige, or *America* as if the land of Americus after Americus, its discoverer, a man of sagacious mind, since both Europe and Asia have derived their names from women." So long ago were men fearful that women were getting more than their rights! In the margin of this note he printed the word *America*.

The exact words of the St. Die cosmographer are as follows :

"Nunc vero et hæ partes sunt latius lustratæ, et alia quarta pars per Americum Vesputium (ut in sequentibus audietur) inventa est, quam non video cur quis jure vetet ab Americo inventore, sagacis ingenii viro, Amerigen, quasi Americi terram, sive Americam dicendam: cum et Europa et Asia a mulieribus sua sortitæ sint nomina. Ejus situm et gentium mores et binis Americi navigationibus quæ sequuntur liquide intelligi dant."

This suggestion, according to our best knowledge, was the first ever made for giving honor to Americus and a collective name to his findings. It was published in 1507, on the 25th of April, which is accordingly the birth-day of the American name. But it never has been pretended that Americus knew Hylacomylus or could by possibility have incited him to bring forward his name.

It is not to be forgotten that the name America was thus proposed in 1507. This date refutes and renders ridiculous the pretense that Americus first foisted the name into maps when he was head of the Spanish cartological bureau, for he was not appointed to that position till a year afterward. Could he be guilty of a sin that was committed before he was born? No more than he could be guilty of Adam's sin. No more than a preacher can be called to account for his hearers' naps if they begin before he stands up for sermonizing.

Besides, as already stated, the earliest map on which the word *America* is inscribed, was made eight years after the death of Americus, and that name was introduced on Spanish maps later than any where else.

If any further vindication of Americus from the stain of stealing the laurels of Columbus could be needed we should see it in the fact that Columbus, to the very close of his life and his son after him, though very jealous for his father's glory, remained the fast friends of Americus. The charges of Las Casas, Humboldt considers refuted by the life-long friendship of the Columbus family with Americus. He also remarks that those charges are very mild near the beginning of his book, which was written soon after the death of Americus, but very harsh near the end of it which was written thirty years afterward. We may, therefore, appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober—from Las Casas in his dotage to Las Casas in his best years.

Again, Cuba was believed to be the continent till after the death of Columbus, and he discovered that island in 1492. Americus sharing in this belief had no motive to date his first voyage 1497, unless it then took place. Why forge and falsify only for the name of discovering what, as was firmly believed, had already been five years discovered?

It was once my fortune to visit Freiburg—the native town of the namer of America. My journey thither in 1868 was repaid by its mountain scenery, its streets irrigated with living water after the manner of Salt Lake,—its cathedral unsurpassed in Germany till Strasburg was captured, and its associations with the inventor of gunpowder. But I was not then aware that it had given birth to the god-father of our western hemisphere. Had I been, its charms would for me have been ten-fold. I also passed near Saint Die where the name "America" was first printed, and perhaps first written. Had this fact been known to me how gladly would I have turned aside to gaze upon that cradle of our name. However small to the eye it would have been great to the mind. Still greater would have been my interest in it, had I not been ignorant that a head-master of the school there, Pierre D'Ailly, had written the picture of the world—*Imago mundi*, which stimulated



Columbus to his great voyage, and which is still to be seen in Seville with marginalia penned by the hand of Columbus himself. Americans will ere long pilgrim to Saint Die, as the mother of their name, and so the source of a stream flowing further than the Mississippi, yes from pole to pole.

From the peaks of the Vosges, towering above the college of Hylacomylus, you can almost espy Strasburg, which claims the invention of printing, Freiburg where gunpowder was first compounded in Christendom, and Spires where Protestantism first assumed its name.

The new name for the new continent, proposed by Hylacomylus in 1507, was employed about five years after by Vadianus of Vienna, who indeed, until recent researches, was mistaken for its author. But three years sooner, or in 1509, it was adopted by an anonymous writer, who then published, in the neighboring Strasburg, his "*Globus Mundi*, or a description of the world as a round globe, whereby every man, even if he do not know much, can see with his own eyes that there are antipodes whose feet are opposite ours, together with many other things concerning the fourth part of the earth recently discovered by Americus."

Here, in this title, is one secret of the special importance attached to discoveries in *South America*, and hence to the exploits of Americus. His logic of facts rooted up two dogmas which had been viewed as essential to orthodoxy, one that there could not be antipodes, and the other that the equatorial zone was too hot to be inhabited. A commentator on Albertus Magnus soon detecting in him the same heretical taint, exclaimed in 1514, as if at the fulfillment of prophecy. "Lo! Albertus, two centuries ago, conceived that the earth might be inhabited beyond the equator, as Americus has found and described it"—things not in heaven and on earth but *under* the earth.

Interest in occidental exploration turned mainly southward for another reason, namely, that the first adventurers to the

West Indies and northward, reported much codfish, but no gold. Where the carcass is there the eagles gather. *Ubi mel, ibi apes.*

Onward from 1511 the name America appears in most geographies, and from 1520 in most maps. But it long denoted no more than a portion of our southern hemisphere which was itself up to the year 1548 reckoned rather an island in the West Indies than a continent. The earliest known MS. map bearing the name America, is supposed to date from 1514. It was drawn by Leonardo da Vinci, and is among the treasures of the British museum. (R. H. Major, p. 388.) The extension of the name is worth tracing, yet not easy to trace.

On the Nuremberg globe of 1520 the southern part of the new continent is inscribed, *America vel Brasilia sive papagallia terra*, and the name for some decades after seems no more than commensurate with Brazil.

The name "America" in English cannot be traced back of 1520, and then it appears in an anonymous work "touching dyvers straunge regyons and the new found landys." It is thus introduced:

"But this new lands founde lately  
Been called America by cause only  
Americus dyd first them fynde."

A year or two later was issued the first English book descriptive of this America. In this book the new region is spelled "Armenica." A century later Lord Bacon (vol. xiii. p. 196), speaks of "Mexico, Peru, Chili and other parts of the *West Indies.*"

The Landshut cosmography of 1524 calls America *now* a fourth part of the world—but adds that it is an island. "*Quoniam mari undique clauditur insula merito appellatur.*"

Copernicus, in 1543, writes that his theory was confirmed anew by taking into account the islands brought to light in his time, and especially America, which, owing to its magnitude still unascertained, men thought to be another world, *alter*

*orbis terrarum*. The great astronomer was before his age in geography also. So potent is a name that men still called geographies "Ptolemies," as we now call a dictionary Webster, though so metamorphosed that Webster would not recognize it. But the Ptolemy of 1540, only three years before the death of Copernicus, inscribes the map of the western hemisphere *Novæ Insulæ*, and its southern portion *Insula Atlantica quam vocant Brasiliæ et Americæ*. In the Ptolemy two years later there is still no collective name for the north half of our continent, but a strait runs through it labeled *per hoc fretum iter patet ad Molucas*.

The rapids at Montreal were named La Chine (China) because the pioneers there thought they could ascend the St. Lawrence even into the Celestial Empire.

Nor were these Frenchmen so far wrong as were their more learned compatriots, for in "the Mirror of the World," issued at Lyons in 1546, three years after the death of Copernicus, we read: "Since Ptolemy no land called a continent has been discovered except one called America, about which we are not well assured, and several islands. As to America (which the writer also calls *L'Améque*,) I place little reliance on those who have been there, but speak of it so obscurely that one cannot guess what their dreams mean." Two years before, the Brazil map is inscribed *America seu Insula Brasiliæ*. The Antwerp cosmography of 1545 inscribes the map of the Western World on the southern part *America*, and on the northern, which is a narrow, elongated prolongation, *Baccælearum*, a word which means land of cod fish.

At length, in the Venice Ptolemy of 1548, forty-seven years after the discovery of Brazil, the southern half of the New World is mapped as a continent. *A partir de 1548 toutes les cartes que j'ai examinées représentent l'Amérique meridionale comme un continent*. So says Santarem, but his meaning is not clear, for he seems also to say that the map of South America is inscribed *Castill del Oro*, Golden Castile.

The new name *America*, having mastered the Southern, that is the largest, richest and best known half of the Western world, naturally spread over its outlying peninsulas, and the Northern portion was still either viewed as nothing more than one of them, or most of it was deemed more likely to be joined to Asia than to South America.

At some date, however, between 1548 and 1570, North America had also grown in men's minds to the dimensions of a continent, or at least to half that size, for on a map of 1570, the entire new world is inscribed *America*. This map of 1570 is the most ancient of all the goodly number in the library of our Wisconsin Historical Society. Its imprint is Antwerp. This map of the new world is inscribed near the Arctic circle, *America, sive India Nova*. The northern and southern portions are described as the northern and southern peninsulas, but neither of them is inscribed with any general name. It is added that the southern peninsula was called *Terra Firma* by Spaniards.

This map also shows a southern continent encircling the whole globe and at certain points almost touching the equator.

There is a wide channel from Baffin's Bay to the Pacific, although our portion of the northern peninsula stretches so far westward that its western shore is almost in sight of Japan.

When the name *America* was extended from pole to pole it lost its hold on Brazil, and it would seem for a time on the two grand divisions of the New World.

In Heylin's "*Cosmographie*," long in great repute, published in 1652, we read that "the fourth and last part of the world is called by some and most aptly the New World, but the most usual and yet somewhat the more improper name is *America*." "The whole is naturally divided into two great peninsulas, whereof that towards the north is called *Mexicana*, and that towards the south hath the name *Peruana*." On Heylin's map, however, the northern peninsula is inscribed "*America Mexicana*," the southern "*Peruana America*."

One question remains, and that too important to be now considered.

It is whether Americus really landed on the American main before Columbus and Cabot. Varnhagen claims that he did, and so that America is no misnomer after all.

He must have so landed if his date is correct, and Humboldt has demonstrated that his voyages are no where willfully falsified.

But however this may be, thus much seems clear, that Americus next to Columbus best deserved to have the New World named for him, that he never sought that honor by any means fair or foul, that the name originated without his knowledge, never appeared on a map until after his death, and then was long confined to a region smaller than that he had himself discovered.

It is pleasant to see clouds of suspicion rolled away from any character. Thereafter we think better of our race, and learn to believe Satan himself not so black as he is painted. What a good time was that when men ceased to burn geometries, on perceiving that the sign plus might not be popish, and that circles might not be conjurer's rings. It was a still better day when men saw a sovereign die and yet suspected neither poison nor foul play. It is especially pleasant to be assured that the American name which is our own, and which will be in the mouths of millions forever, is neither a monument of ingratitude, nor yet owes its origin to fraud. The word America, according to etymologists, means *rich in work*. May the American continent, in all its parts, forever deserve its name!

